

I urge my colleagues to join with me in establishing this dental loan repayment program that will meet an immediate and pressing need in communities across the country, as we have for other professions.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE  
ABSENTEE ACT OF 2007

**HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 3, 2007*

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill to provide free postage for absentee or mail-in ballots in federal elections.

Since voter participation rates are shockingly low in this nation where we pride ourselves on our democracy, our leaders must do all we can to encourage voter turnout and remove obstacles.

We know that not everyone can make it to the polls on Election Day and we know that some voters prefer to vote from home because they have more time to review their options and do not want to wait in line to vote.

While only 6 percent of voters used the vote by mail option in 1979, that number has risen to around 40 percent in areas where voters can vote by mail for any reason such as in my district in San Diego.

In our fast-paced hectic society, voting by mail is an option that works for many people. We need to make voting by mail as convenient as possible. Making ballots postage free is a step in that direction.

The price of a stamp is not a burden for many people though it certainly is for some. For these people, adding a stamp to a ballot is a sort of poll tax and that is wrong.

For those for whom a stamp is affordable, it is not always easy to acquire a stamp or to know how much postage to put on an odd-sized ballot envelope. In fact, a postal employee even told me she drives around with her own mail in her truck for days because she can't find the time to weigh it and buy stamps.

With election deadlines, voters do not have time to wait until they can stop to pick up stamps. They should be able to vote and put their ballots in any mailbox without worrying about finding the right amount of postage.

We must also realize that providing postage for mail-in ballots does not come at tremendous cost to the federal government. Postage for ballots is managed in bulk making them eligible business reply rates which cost less than individual first class pieces. But more importantly, each voter need not figure out how much postage to put on.

It is hard to give an exact cost estimate of this bill since the number of mail-in voters varies election to election. However, if the federal government paid for the mail-in ballots in the 2004 election, the cost would have been around \$23 million. That is a small price to pay when you compare it with the billions we are spending on election machines and other costs.

In Congress, we have become accustomed to sending mail out with just the frank. We don't worry about having the proper postage. Shouldn't we share that privilege with the voters?

Creating postage-paid mail-in ballots is just one of the three major improvements we can make to mail-in voting. The others are allowing no-excuse absentee voting and implementing a ballot tracking system similar to that which we use for overnight packages. I have introduced legislation addressing these other areas as well.

If voters could vote by mail for any reason and know that they could just toss their ballots in any mailbox without having to worry about postage and if they knew they could track the progress of their ballot, more voters would vote by mail, the strain at the polls would be less and I suspect voter turnout would increase dramatically.

COMMENDING THE MAINEIACS

**HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD**

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 3, 2007*

Mr. MICHAUD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the Lewiston Maineiacs for their 4–3 victory over their Rouyn-Noranda Huskies, completing a 4 game winning streak and advancing the team to the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League President Cup Finals. Since 2003, the Maineiacs have brought crowds to the Androscoggin Bank Colisée, and they have enjoyed spectacular success this season.

Off the ice, the team's players and their mascot, Lewy, are fixtures throughout the greater Lewiston-Auburn community, visiting local businesses, promoting reading and academic achievement in the schools, and supporting youth sports for the area children and young adults.

The Maineiacs have had an excellent season and much credit is due to the hardworking players and their coach, Clem Jodoin. With a 50–14 record regular season record—the best in the league—the Maineiacs moved quickly through the playoffs and will play in the 2007 President Cup Finals this Friday.

I would like to commend the team for their tremendous performance this season and their continued involvement in their local community.

Go Maineiacs!

PAYING TRIBUTE TO LINDA F.  
BRANCH

**HON. JON C. PORTER**

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 3, 2007*

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Linda F. Branch, managing owner of Customer Service Management Consultants, LLC for her being honored by the Nevada District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration as the Microenterprise Initiative Business Person of the Year.

Through CSMC, LLC, Linda has been dedicated to providing a wide selection of training and workforce development solutions since 2003 throughout Southern Nevada. As CEO, Linda has committed CSMC to bringing quality and excellence in training and staff development solutions to their clients' missions and

goals as a service provider. CSMC, LLC is a leading provider of continuing education training for healthcare and human service providers and they provide training solutions that are customized face-to-face and online for front line staff, middle management and upper management.

Linda has 30 years experience as a human resource provider, including facilitation and training in both public and private organizations. Linda is a well-known speaker and facilitator and has written a number of training workbooks that are certified through the Clark County Commission on Post Secondary Education. She has also received continuing education unit certification from the Nevada State Board of Examiners for Social Work on two of her training workbooks. Linda earned her bachelor's degree in Social Work and a master's degree in Organizational Management.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Linda F. Branch. Her dedication to providing continuing education training and commitment to excellence are truly commendable. I applaud her efforts and wish her the best in her future endeavors.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 3, 2007*

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, May 1, 2007, I was unable to be present for votes. Had I been present: For rollcall No. 270—H. Res. 334, Supporting the Goals and Ideals of National Community College Month, I would have voted "yea"; for rollcall No. 271—H. Con. Res. 112, Supporting the Goals and Ideals of a National Child Care Worthy Wage Day, I would have voted "no"; and for rollcall No. 239—H. Res. 272, to commend the University of Florida Gators for their historic win in the 2007 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Men's Basketball Tournament, I would have voted "yea."

INTRODUCTION OF BILL TO  
SHORTEN DEPRECIABLE LIVES  
OF ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION AS-  
SETS

**HON. PHIL ENGLISH**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 3, 2007*

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, today I introduced legislation that would shorten the depreciable lives of electric distribution assets from 20 to 15 years. I feel this legislation, is necessary to spur investment in a time where the demand for electricity is at an all-time high. Despite continued energy efficiency improvements, electricity consumption is expected to increase 41 percent by 2030, according to the Energy Information Administration.

To meet this growing demand, electric companies must expand and upgrade the nation's electricity infrastructure. The need to expand the nation's distribution infrastructure will require significant investment. According to a recent study by the Brattle Group ("Why Are